the private sector educational organizations, will be synergized with those of government and other established educational institutions.

(5) The Union and State Governments will take specific measures to promotee-governance to improve transparency, accountability and efficiency.

(6) The Centre will reduce customs and excise regime for optical fiber, IT hardware, set top boxes, other Internet access devices, and TV sets for distance education and extension programs.

(7) There shall be no Sales tax and other State Taxes on the IT sector for the next three to five years.

(8) The accreditation mechanism for IT education shall be strengthened, by among other things, decentralizing the power of the AICTE to the States.

(9) The decision on setting up of private Universities should be speeded up. Private Universities should be set up in consultation with the State Governments.

(10) Availability of bandwidth must precede the demand. This is essential as there is a gap between demand and supply of the bandwidth namely international, national long distance, last mile and satellite. All the four elements of telecom intrastructure need to be enhanced and improved in terms of reliability and quality also.

(11) A special rate for Internet access to educational institutions may be considered. All ISPs may be urged to extend special rates. ISPs may also be urged to levy a flat rate for internet usage for all other Internet dial-up subscribers.

(12) Internet international gateways already sanctioned must become operational by August 15, 2000.

(13) Permission may be given for utilization of Ku band for educational, health and other Government broadcasts.

Growth in IT Sector

*179. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Information Technology sector grew by 53 per cent during 1999-2000;

(b) if so, what was the growth made in monetary terms as compared to last five years; and

(c) what are the future programmes of Government to give further fillip to the IT industry?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The turnover and growth in Computer Software during the last five years is as follows:—

Year	Turnover (Rs. Crores)	Growth%
95-96	4,240	63%
96-97	6,300	49%
97-98	9,970	58%
98-99	15,890	59%
99-2000	24,350	53%

(c) The details of incentives for IT sector are given in the Statement.

Statement

Incentives to IT Sector

To encourage and promote information technology business abroad, the Government of India has abolished licensing and simplified the procedures to make them transparent. The following major steps have been taken to promote export of IT Sector:—

1. To provide legal framework so as to facilitate Electronic Commerce in the country, the Government has drafted Information Technology Act. The Act provides legal framework for amongst others recognition of electronic contracts, prevention of computer crimes, and electronic filing/documents. The mechanism of digital signature has been approved to address the issues of jurisdiction, authentication and origination.
2. Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme at 5% duty.
3. Foreign direct Investments up to 100% allowed.

4. Software Technology Parks Scheme.

5. Special Stock Option Schemes for Indian Software Companies linked with ADR/GDR offering.

6. Working Capital Finance to Information Technology and Software industry.

7. Sweat Equity has been introduced in the Companies Act.

8. Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) access upto 50% of FOB value of exports for units under Export Oriented Unit (EOU)/Export Processing Zone (EPZ)/Software Technology Parks (STP) Scheme.

9. Depreciation on Computer @60% per annum.

10. Reduction in Custom Duty on computer and peripherals to 15%. The customs duty on all storage devices, integrated circuits, microprocessors, data display tubes and deflection components of colour monitors is @ 0%.

11. Software exempted from custom duty and excise duty.

12. Relaxation in income tax to software units under EOU/EPZ/STP Schemes.

13. Exemption of withholding tax on interest on External Commercial Borrowings.

14. Computer systems have been made freely importable. The donation of used computers to educational institutes, hospitals etc. have been permitted duty free from units in EOU/EPZ/STP/Electronics Hardware Technology Park (EHTP)

15. Exemption on income from dividents on Venture Capital Fund.

16. "Business Support Centre" has been opened in "Silicon Valley" California, USA to assist small & medium enterprises in establishing strategic alliance in the US.

Threats to Fijian nationals of Indian Origin

*180. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) in view of the recent crisis in Fiji, whether it is a fact that Fijian nationals of Indian origin are facing great threats to their life and property; and